

Aberdeenshire Council

Policy on Volunteering

1. Definition of Volunteering

“Volunteering is defined as:

‘The commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside one’s immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain’.

It should be noted that the term “volunteering sector” is used for voluntary activity in the statutory and private sectors as well as in the voluntary sector.

2. The Scope of the Council’s Role in Relation to Volunteering

The Council recognises that it has a variety of roles in relation to volunteering including acting as funder, purchaser, supporter and engager.

This policy therefore addresses:

- the Council’s relations with volunteers whom it engages directly in its service delivery;
- the implications for Council funding for volunteer action;
- the implications for purchase of service contracts and agreements;
- how the Council will consult on policy matters with local volunteering interests;
- the Council’s relationship with the Aberdeenshire Volunteer Network (AVN) which provides important infrastructure for promoting and developing the contribution of volunteering at the local level;
- how the Council will support the development of employer-supported volunteering in its area
- the overall relationship which the Council plans to adopt in dealing with all volunteering interests;
- clarification of the Council’s direct involvement with volunteers through its services and the extension of service provision.

3. A Review of the Local Context of the Council Policy

Aberdeenshire Council has inherited a number of varying practices in relation to the voluntary sector and following the guidelines on volunteering issued by the Scottish Office, it provides an opportunity to look at:-

- the pattern of volunteering as experienced by different services and in its wider geographic area;
- the strengths upon which a future volunteering policy may be built;
- the specific volunteering interests which will take the lead and which should be part of any consultation process;
- the definition of a proposed on-going review process.

4. A Statement of Underlying Principles

The Council:

- recognises the unique contribution made by volunteers in the work of its services and the important and valuable contribution made by volunteers to the fabric of the local community in many areas of life, including social and community care, community development, the dissemination of information, environmental improvement, education and advocacy;
- recognises that the role of volunteers supports but should not replace that of employees and officers who are required to provide the Council's statutory service;
- gives commitment to volunteering and will implement measures to support volunteering through funding and other forms of help;
- will set a model of good practice with regard to the involvement of volunteers;
- will ensure that its policies will not adversely affect volunteering;
- will give recognition, support and publicity to the work of the Aberdeenshire Volunteer Network as the key co-ordinating and development body for volunteering in the area, and as an "open door" recruitment centre for volunteers;
- will aim to provide training and support for volunteers in statutory sector projects, make provision for training and support in grants and contracts and will promote, support and provide, where possible, training for managers of volunteers where appropriate **and will ensure that appropriate health and safety training is identified through the risk assessment process;**
- will ensure volunteers will have the same health and safety rights as employees;
- will establish a mechanism by which it can monitor the value and effectiveness of its policy on volunteering; and
- will use its volunteering policy to inform and support other policies including those on the Voluntary Sector and Decentralisation.

5. Statement of Aims of the Policy for Volunteering

This policy statement aims to:

- recognise the importance of volunteering to the communities in the local authority area;
- actively promote the importance, effectiveness and value of volunteering;
- secure greater recognition and appreciation for the contribution of volunteers in society;
- mobilise more people to volunteer and improve the ease with which people may participate in volunteering;
- improve the accessibility of volunteering to include under-represented groups such as young people, older people and people from ethnic minority groups;
- ensure the application of policies of equal opportunities in relation to volunteering;

- increase the range and number of volunteering opportunities in all sectors;
- improve the quality of volunteering throughout all sectors and in all areas of the Council's work and within its local area;
- clarify the role of volunteers and address the relation between volunteers, those who engage volunteers and those who receive their services;
- improve the organisation and infrastructure of volunteering and set up channels for consultation with the local volunteering sector;
- clarify the key areas of the Council's responsibility and practice in relation to volunteering in its area; and
- set standards of good practice in working with volunteers.

6. A Statement on Principles of Good Practice

6.1 The Council in engaging volunteers will accept the following principles:-

- **General**

The Council should, as part of the development of service delivery, identify, where appropriate, opportunities for the use of volunteers. It is recognised that the nature of volunteering activity will be diverse and varied and that volunteers will be involved to varying degrees; the Council will ensure that a level of support is provided which is appropriate to the involvement.

The tasks to be performed by volunteers will be clearly defined, so that all concerned with their activities are sure of their respective responsibilities.

- **Relationship with Employees of the Council**

Volunteers will not be asked to take on tasks formerly or currently undertaken by employees whose posts have been cut, or to work in ways which facilitate a decrease in paid employment.

As far as possible, volunteers will have responsibility for carrying out particular tasks and will enhance the work of employees.

Steps will be taken to ensure that employees at all levels are clear about the role of volunteers and that good working relationships are fostered between employees and volunteers.

- **Engagement of Volunteers**

Volunteering opportunities, where appropriate, will be advertised.

The Council's Equality Statement will be adhered to in relation to volunteers.

Volunteers will be vetted by Council Services including the taking up references for volunteers who have considerable access to children and other vulnerable groups.

Vetting/screening procedures will take account of proposals for a national system of accreditation and vetting information for adults working with children and young people in Scotland.

Volunteers who offer their services to the Council will have their offers dealt with as quickly as possible.

Volunteering opportunities will match the volunteer's skills, talents and interests with the Council's needs. In the absence of suitable placements, volunteers will be referred on to a more appropriate volunteering situation. Once placed, the Council expect volunteers to comply with existing policies and procedures. While the bulk of volunteering activity may be undertaken by adults, it is recognised that some volunteering work may involve young people. The Council will provide appropriate and proper levels of support and supervision for young people who volunteer.

- **Support for Volunteers**

The Council will:-

Ensure that adequate management/support arrangements for volunteers are introduced.

Provide an induction period and a review session to assess appropriate progress.

Reimburse appropriate expenses. Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim.

Ensure adequate provision of insurance for volunteers. Volunteers will be given information on other legislation or policies, eg Health and Safety which may affect them.

6.2 The Council in engaging volunteers recognises the following rights of volunteers:

To know what is expected of them

To have clearly specified lines of support and supervision

To be valued

To have safe working conditions

To be insured

To know their rights and responsibilities

To be paid agreed expenses

To receive appropriate and relevant training

To be free from any form of discrimination or harassment which contravenes good equal opportunities practice

To experience personal development through participation

and expects that Volunteers will:

Be reliable

Be honest

Respect confidentiality

Attend training and support sessions when agreed

Carry out their tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of the Council

Work within agreed guidelines and remits.

7. External Services Involving Volunteers

7.1 The Council in purchasing services involving volunteers will ensure that:

The role of volunteers is made clear and that satisfactory arrangements are in place for their management.

Information, advice and assistance will be made available to voluntary management committees about the handling of the contractual arrangements.

Consideration will be given to utilising agreements to set out the roles and commitments of the volunteers.

7.2 The Council in funding organisations involving volunteers will recommend that:

Funded voluntary organisations adopt similar principles of good practice.

7.3 The Council in its encouragement of employer-supported volunteering will:

Increase awareness of the opportunities for volunteering through advertising in Council bulletins, pre-retirement courses, etc.

8. Relationship with Voluntary Sector

8.1 The Council will develop its relationship with the local volunteering sector on the following principles:

The Council recognises the benefits of the involvement of the local umbrella groups in consulting volunteers and will establish recognised mechanisms to ensure that the voluntary sector is consulted on the wide range of issues which affect volunteers.

The Council recognises the need for a strategic approach to the development of volunteering and supports the work of the Aberdeenshire Volunteer Network in providing leadership in the volunteering sector.

The Council will encourage networking to co-ordinate work, promote good practice and ensure quality of service to the consumer.

The Council will support the work of local volunteering agencies.

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